



HELPFILE

PUT YOUR QUESTIONS TO OUR TECHNICAL EXPERTS

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HELPFILE

Paul Mullen answers your computing queries

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When writing to Helpfile, please try to give full details of your problem. We also require both daytime and evening phone numbers in case we need more information. Although the policy of Computer Shopper is not to publish readers' email addresses, we include them in Helpfile so that other readers with experience of similar problems can share their solution (please also cc any comments to helpfile@computershopper.co.uk). If you would prefer not to have your email address published, please say so.

PAUL MULLEN

Paul has been a transport demand forecaster, economic adviser to the government and IT consultant to many big companies, and has been using and writing software for personal computers since 1978

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WINDOWS PAGE FILE

CAN I MOVE THE XP PAGE FILE?

Q My Windows page file is 1.5GB and is stored on the C: drive along with the operating system. I want to move the page file to the D: drive to avoid backing up this large file, and thus save time and space on my backup DVDs. This was easy under Windows 98 SE. It also seems easy using Windows XP Service Pack 2. You go to System Properties, Advanced, Performance Settings, Advanced, Virtual Memory, Change, click on C: drive and check No Paging File. Then you go to the D: drive, check Custom size and set the initial and maximum sizes.

However, Explorer shows the 1.5GB page file is still on the C: drive and there is no page file on the D: drive. Checking the settings made above shows the page file to be correctly set for the D: drive; there should be no Page File on the C: drive. I have even manually deleted the page file from the C: drive, but not from within Windows, and rebooted. It is still resurrected on C: and not D:.

A White, duckman@awhite.fsbusiness.co.uk

A Depending on the settings you select for a system dump after a crash, Windows may require you to have at least a small

page file on the system drive. This is used for saving the contents of the memory should the system crash. Unfortunately, Windows allows you to specify that there should not be a page file on the C: drive, doesn't give an error but then ignores your settings when you start the computer.

Try setting the minimum size of C:'s page file at 2MB, with a maximum size of 64MB. On the drive where you want the main page file to be, set the initial size to the same as the maximum size; it should be at least one-and-a-half times the amount of physical memory in your PC. Setting the minimum size the same as the maximum prevents fragmentation of the page file. Sysinternals (www.sysinternals.com) has a free tool called PageDefrag that will defragment existing page files.

There are rare circumstances when Windows won't accept user changes, though we're not sure why. In these cases, you can set the page file using RegEdit. Windows 2000 users must use Regedt32, not RegEdit. Look for the key called HKey_Local_Machine, System, CurrentControlSet, Control, Session Manager, Memory Management. In the right-hand window, you should see a value called PagingFiles that contains the file path, initial and maximum sizes. Each drive has a separate line. Edit these manually and restart the PC.

INTERNET EXPLORER BROWSER HELPER OBJECTS

IE TOOLBAR HAS EBAY ICON

Q Recently a new icon has appeared on the menu bar of Internet Explorer. An eBay drop-down menu has taken up residence to the right of the Help menu item. I'm not an eBay user and rarely visit the site. As far as I can remember, I have not downloaded any add-ons for Internet Explorer 6.

The menu appears to be harmless but I would like to remove it. However, so far I have failed to find a way. There are no references to eBay in Control Panel or Add and Remove Programs, and a search of the Registry brings up no instances of eBay. Can you help?

Mike Hides, mike@hides.org.uk

A It appears that someone has downloaded and installed the eBay toolbar. I think eBay has been pushing users to download it; in addition to giving quick access to eBay auctions, it guards against fake

eBay or PayPal sites that may try to lure you into revealing your password. If so, you should see a horizontal scroll arrow to the right of the eBay icon. When you click on it, a drop-down arrow and search window will appear. When you click on the drop-down arrow, one of the options should be to uninstall the toolbar. You can also hide this toolbar using the View, Toolbars menu.

Microsoft seems to have implemented IE's Browser Helper Objects (BHOs) and toolbars in a haphazard fashion and there is no simple way to see which add-ons are installed or how to remove those you don't want. Programs such as HijackThis will list and allow you to remove Internet Explorer add-ons, but are not very user-friendly. The best way to see and remove all IE add-ons is to use Microsoft AntiSpyware, which is available as a free download from www.microsoft.com/security. Once installed, you should click on Advanced Tools then System Explorers to view the add-ons.



USB REMOVING OLD DRIVERS

FLASH DRIVE WON'T REINSTALL

Q I've been using an EasyDisk 128MB USB flash drive for over a year. At first it was detected and worked without a hitch using hot plugging. My system is slightly unusual in that it has two USB1 ports on the mainboard and four USB2 ports on a PCI card. I had the EasyDisk running happily off one of the USB1 ports. I attempted to dismount the device using the unplug icon in the Notification area. A message said it was OK to remove the device. I did so, only to find another message saying I had wrongly removed the device. I then found I could not access the device at all.

On booting the EasyDisk device would briefly light, only to be shut down immediately by Windows. I reinstalled the device on a USB2 port. It installed OK and was happily running once more until I installed a cable modem on the USB2 port. I have since started using a PCI Network Card instead. Now I cannot get Windows to reinstall my USB device properly, even though I have reformatted my drive and should have a clean system, and it won't light the device. Windows recognises it only as a USB mass storage device, and not the EasyDisk as it originally did. The device is not lit and does not appear in Windows Explorer.

When I jiggle the flash drive in the port, it lights up. Then Windows recognises it as an EasyDisk and claims to be installing the software, and an unplug icon appears in the Notification area. Using this icon to eject the device shows two USB mass storage devices. The first one is described as unknown and the second as the EasyDisk. The device does not appear in Windows Explorer, whether it is lit or not. I am not convinced the drive is faulty because it does light up.

Gerry Walker, me.meggie@ntlworld.com

A There are several issues with USB mass storage devices. You will usually find a device is recognised fine until you plug in another mass storage device. After that, neither device is recognised. Such problems are due to messed-up drivers.

In some cases, the problem may be a hardware problem with that particular device. It is always worth checking that it is recognised and works correctly in another computer. It's very suspicious that you can get the drive to be seen by name by 'jiggling' it. This jiggling causes the USB port to see a new device and ask the device for its information. For some reason, the information is getting transmitted correctly the second time but not the first. That may be due to a damaged contact making only an intermittent connection.



▲ If you're having problems getting a flash drive to be recognised, first check that it works in another PC

Sometimes the device is properly recognised in Device Manager but does not appear in Explorer. The most common cause is a conflict with a mapped network drive letter. When Windows allocates drive letters to removable devices, such as USB drives, it does not check to see if the letter is already in use for a network drive. So if you map a drive letter to a remote network drive, pick one towards the end of the alphabet, leaving lots of unused drive letters between your network drives and your hard disks and CD drives. You should only allocate letters such as U, V, W, X, Y and Z to network drives.

External hubs can cause problems and are best not used for mass storage devices such as external hard disks or flash drives. If you use an external hub, connect up any power supply provided for it. The USB port may not be able to provide sufficient power for devices connected to the hub.

It is important that you are using the latest USB drivers for your operating system. Windows XP originally came without built-in support for USB2, so you will need to install at least Service Pack 1 to be able to use USB2. It is always a good idea to load all the latest service packs and patches; Windows XP SP2 had some important USB fixes. Once you have upgraded Windows, check you have the latest drivers for your motherboard's chipset. Loading certain chipset drivers before loading Windows XP's SP1 is a known cause of problems.

When you upgrade Windows drivers through Windows Update, it will not replace vendor-specific drivers. This may cause problems if you have loaded USB2 drivers that vendors may have provided before the official Microsoft USB2 drivers were available.

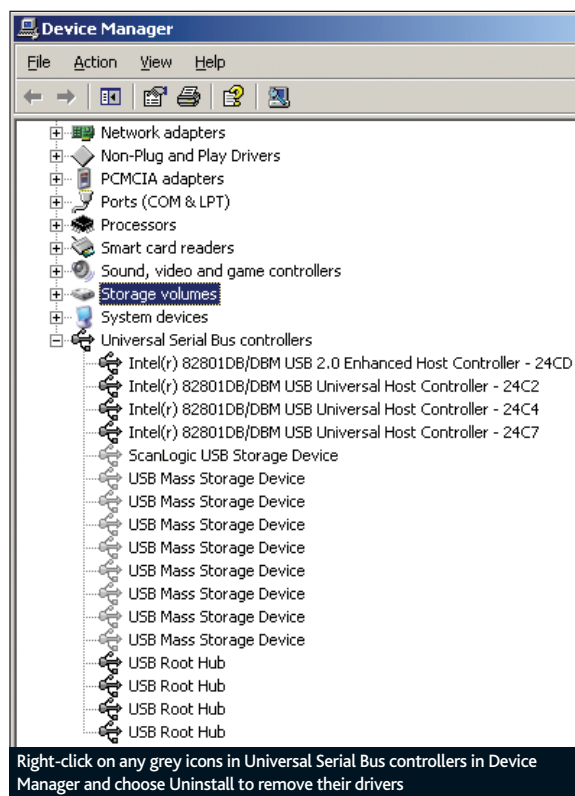
REMOVING USB DRIVERS

To clear driver issues where the USB device used to be recognised but now works only in other computers, you should remove all USB drivers from Device Manager, disconnect all USB devices and then reboot. To make sure you have completely removed all USB drivers, you'll need to remove the hidden devices in Device Manager.

First, set up Device Manager so it shows all hidden devices and details of devices that are installed but not currently attached to the computer. Start a command prompt and run the following commands:

```
set DEVMG_SHOW_DETAILS=1
set DEVMG_SHOW_NONPRESENT_DEVICES=1
start devmgmt.msc
```

This sets up and opens Device Manager. You'll still need to click the View menu item and choose



Right-click on any grey icons in Universal Serial Bus controllers in Device Manager and choose Uninstall to remove their drivers

'Show hidden devices' to see entries for devices that have been installed before but are not currently connected. These will appear as grey icons as above. Double-click the entries for Disk drives, Other devices, and Universal Serial Bus controllers. Whenever you encounter a grey icon, right-click it and choose Uninstall from the menu.

Finally, remove Registry entries that refer to vendor ID (VID) from HKey_Local_Machine, System, CurrentControlSet, Enum, USB. Those you need will be redetected when Windows restarts and you insert your USB devices. If you use a USB keyboard or mouse, do not remove the VID entries for these devices. Doing so could prevent Windows starting properly. If you can't delete a key, you may need to change its permissions by right-clicking on it and choosing Permissions. Highlight Everyone and select Full Control in the Permissions section. Click Apply and then OK.

When you reboot the computer, your devices should be recognised correctly.



▲ External USB hubs can cause problems for storage devices such as external hard disks and flash drives



LCD MONITOR ACCEPTABLE QUALITY

DEAD PIXELS IN MY LCD MONITOR

Q A few days after I bought my Samsung LCD monitor, I noticed three permanent dead pixels. Another two pixels go on and off. The dead pixels are in the centre of the monitor and are very irritating. One of the dead pixels is bright green and another is bright red, while the third is black. Can I demand a replacement?

Sinan Al-Jassar, sinanaljassar@yahoo.co.uk

A Dead pixels in LCD panels are a problem. It is virtually impossible to make all LCD panels without any dead pixels, so most manufacturers have a rule about the number of dead pixels that are considered acceptable. The position and nature of the bad pixel is relevant. Pixels close to the centre of the screen and those

that are constantly lit with a bright colour are going to be far more annoying than dark pixels at the screen's edge.

Taking this into account, different makers have different policies, but many adhere to the ISO standard 13406-2. This states the allowable defects for Class II panels. Class I panels, intended for critical applications such as medical use, are not allowed any bad pixels. Like most ISO standards, this standard was written by representatives of major manufacturers.

The number of defects allowed depends on the native resolution of the monitor. Pixels are usually made up of three sub-pixels: one red, one green and one blue. The table above right shows how many malfunctioning pixels and sub-pixels are permitted on a Class II display.

RESOLUTION	PIXELS	SUB-PIXELS	SUB-PIXELS WITHIN 5 ² PIXEL AREA
1,024x768	2	4	2
1,280x1,024	3	7	3
1,600x1,200	4	10	4
2,048x1,536	6	16	6

Samsung is a special case, because about a year ago it announced a 'zero defect' policy in South Korea and certain other markets. In those countries, including Australia, it will replace any monitor that has a single bad pixel. However, the company has left it up to the local subsidiaries to decide whether to implement this policy in each country. Neither Samsung UK or Samsung USA has followed their parent company's example.

WINDOWS PROGRAM TRANSFER

TRANSFERRING PROGRAMS TO A NEW COMPUTER

Q I will be buying a new PC shortly and wish to transfer programs from my present computer to my new one.

Could you please let me know how to do this?

Neil Foran, neil@foran6.freemove.co.uk

A Unfortunately, unless the program is a very old or simple one, you can't just transfer it to a new computer. You can transfer its data, but the program itself will need to be reinstalled from its original installation

discs. This is because when you install a Windows application, it creates entries in many different parts of the Windows Registry. It may also copy various DLL files to the Windows or Windows System folders and create entries for file types used by the program so Windows knows which program to run when you click on a data file.

If you must keep on using programs for which you no longer have the installation discs, the best solution is to get an experienced computer user to transfer the entire contents of your current hard

disk to the new computer, replacing the new installation of Windows. Then run the Windows CD to repair Windows. This installs the device drivers needed by the new computer hardware and creates an installation of Windows that merges old and new settings. This also transfers any problems with the software that might exist on your old computer. If you are having problems already, this is not a good idea. Many new computers do not come with a full Windows CD and do not support repair installation of Windows.

FILE SYSTEMS CONVERTING

FORMATTING AN EXTERNAL DRIVE

Q I recently bought a 250GB LaCie USB2 external drive, mainly for full backups but also for future digital camera images. It started up perfectly with Windows XP, which recognised it in Disk Management as LaCie E:, a local drive formatted using FAT32. The disk behaves well when I copy files to it, copy them back to C: and delete them.

I want to reformat it using NTFS for its superior performance and security, but the LaCie manual is far from clear about how to do this. So I contacted technical support for help and received the following reply:

"Right-click My Computer and select Manage, go into Disk Management. The new drive should be seen at the bottom of the window as the next drive Disk X. Right-click on the left side where it says Disk X and choose Assign Drive Signature and click OK in the next window. Now right-click on the right side where it says Unallocated and choose Create Partition. This will open the Partition Wizard. Follow the instructions from here, choosing the Quick Format option."

I think this assumes the disk is either totally unformatted or has unallocated space that can be partitioned and formatted. This is not the case. I know you can use the command-line Convert utility to change from FAT32 to NTFS. In my case, the single line:

```
convert E: /fs:ntfs
```

would do the trick, as long as the drive is not in use. Which of these techniques would you recommend, or should I stick with FAT32 for my external drive?

Jim James, harlestone@connectfree.co.uk

A We don't like the way LaCie formats these large external drives. The company is best known for making Macintosh peripherals and perhaps this is why it has used FAT32, which is compatible with both Mac and Windows systems. NTFS can be accessed only by Windows computers, not including Windows 98 or earlier.

Although using FAT32 allows you to share the drive with a wider range of computers, this

file system was never intended for use on disk partitions larger than 32GB. In fact, Windows XP refuses to format a partition larger than 32GB with FAT32. Windows Me creates larger partitions. We have found that once a FAT32 partition gets much larger than 64GB, problems arise with drive utilities. They will sometimes become confused by the number of clusters, which is larger than expected. This can then cause loss of data. We strongly advise you to limit FAT32 partitions to 64GB.

We're also not keen on the Convert utility, unless a drive contains data that would be inconvenient to back up. Although it works, it does not arrange the NTFS partition in the optimum way. It is far better to reformat from scratch using Disk Management.

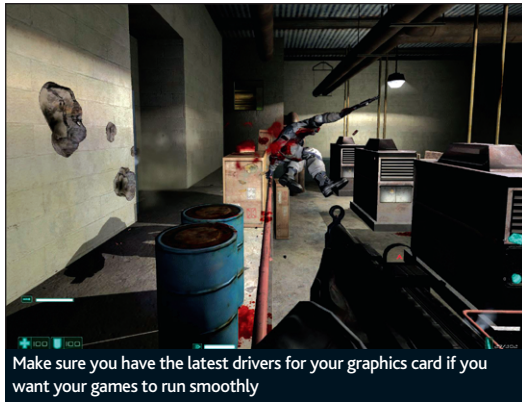
You can access Disk Management through Control Panel, Administrative Tools, Computer Management, although a quicker way to start Disk Management is to click on Start, Run and type diskmgmt.msc. Once you see the external drive, right-click the partition and choose Delete Logical Drive. You can then create a new drive partition in unpartitioned space and format it using NTFS.



GRAPHICS CARDS OVERHEATING

FAST GAMES CAUSE GRAPHICS CARD PROBLEMS

Q Two months ago I upgraded my graphics card to an Inno3D 128MB GeForce 6600 GT. It produced extraordinary results in all my current games, including Battlefield 2, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas and Need For Speed Underground 2. But when I ran the 2005 3D Benchmark software supplied with the card, the computer froze and small multi-coloured boxes appeared on the screen. The portions of the game video that were visible through the boxes had strange



Make sure you have the latest drivers for your graphics card if you want your games to run smoothly

colours. The same problems occur when I run Age of Empires 3 and F.E.A.R. The games freeze and small boxes appear onscreen. Colours sometimes darken and become strange. This happens after a few seconds in F.E.A.R. and within a few minutes in Age of Empires 3.

My friend told me it could be an overheating problem, so I monitored the temperature settings using a utility that came with the graphics card. After playing for a few seconds, I saw that the core temperature was 73 degrees. I allowed it to cool down and then went back to the game. If I keep doing this with Age of Empires 3, I can play the game for two hours. But this doesn't work with F.E.A.R. I opened the case and turned on my ceiling fan when the room temperature was 25 degrees. This works, but I still have to pause the game regularly, though after a longer interval. If I do not do so, small boxes appear and the computer freezes.

Can you confirm this is an overheating problem? I am using version 77.30 of the driver, which came with Battlefield 2.

Suffyan Asad, avbr555777@yahoo.com

A I am not sure that the chip temperature is the problem. These cards are designed to run hot and 73°C is not exceptionally hot. The default slowdown temperature on these cards is 120°C. On the other hand, the temperature sensors are often inaccurate.

If problems occur only after you have been playing a game for a few minutes, then the temperature may be the problem. However, the problem could also be the power supply. If the graphics card is drawing a heavy current when playing games, the supply could be overheating and leading to instability problems.

You should start by downloading the latest drivers for your card. New drivers often cure video glitches and may also affect the temperatures being reported in the temperature monitoring window. While you are at it, get the latest motherboard drivers, particularly the AGP driver.

Next, assuming that the fan on the card is running smoothly, consider the airflow inside your system case. The fan on the card can cool the graphics processor only if there is cool air inside the system case. Fitting an additional fan to the case may improve airflow. Just be careful the fans are not fighting each other. Your aim is to get a smooth airflow through the case.

HARD DISK PARTITIONING

PARTITION MAGIC AND NORTON ANTIVIRUS

Q I have used Partition Magic 8.01 to partition the hard disk on my old Windows Me machine into five logical volumes. Recently I bought a new Mesh PC with a 200GB disk, which I would like to partition as before. The handbook says Partition Magic (PM) is OK to use with Windows XP Home Edition, but has a warning about Norton AntiVirus, which I have also installed. It says: "Because Norton AntiVirus (NAV) interprets changes to partition tables and boot records as potential virus attacks, PM takes steps so that NAV automatically reinoculates. Should NAV give you the choice of repairing the changes, DO NOT select Repair. Instead, inoculate after using PM."

What do they mean by 'inoculate', and how do you do it? When I installed NAV, I had no problems with inoculation and have not found a reference to the term anywhere in the documentation. I do not recall McAfee (as used on my old machine) using it either.

I understand that on all hard disks a second copy of certain boot data is stored at the end of the disk. What happens to this when the disk is repartitioned?

Jim James, harlestone@connectfree.co.uk

A The most common viruses used to be those distributed on the boot sector of floppy disks. When such viruses infect a computer, they copy themselves either to the

master partition record or partition boot sector of the drive. To guard against this, Norton AntiVirus performs a checksum calculation of these areas and stores the result in unused bytes of the master partition record and boot sector. This is what is meant by 'inoculate'.

The software checks that no changes have been made to the master partition record and boot sector on every boot. If the checksum changes, you'll see a screen warning of the change and an offer to restore the previous version of this sector. Most people will never see this warning screen, and it is a little archaic now. Boot sector viruses are virtually extinct, but it is still nice to be warned when critical information such as the master partition record or boot sector code gets changed.

The boot sector of a drive should never change, except when it is formatted or if you install a new operating system. So you will never be asked about changes. Partition Magic attempts to set the checksum so this warning does not appear. If you don't see any warning that is OK.

If you do get a warning, you should choose the re-inoculate option, which tells AntiVirus the change is OK and expected. We think the authors of Partition Magic are trying to warn you that if an anti-virus program says the boot sector has been changed, you should tell it to accept the changes. Allowing it to restore the original partition information would be disastrous.

It is dangerous to use older versions of Partition Magic, as the rapidly increasing size of hard disks

has created many revisions of drive formats and access methods. Hard disks that are bigger than 137GB (128 binary gigabytes or GiB) need to use 48-bit addressing, and could be corrupted by a low-level disk utility that was designed when disks were all less than this size. Readers should verify that the version of Partition Magic used has the latest patches (8.01) and can handle drives over 137GB.

In answer to your second question, there is no duplicate copy of the master partition record. The second copy of the boot sector, which will be found in the last sector of every NTFS partition, is part of the NTFS specification. So Partition Magic will make a copy of this correctly.

Since Microsoft has never released a complete specification of the NTFS, however, there may be other assumptions Microsoft programmers have made about the layout of an NTFS partition that disk utilities might not know about. For example, a third-party program might inadvertently violate the location of the Master File Table. There will always be a little uncertainty about using any partition that was created by a non-Microsoft utility.

Although partition-resizing utilities are useful, this is inherently a dangerous operation. While it works fine in over 90 per cent of cases, there are plenty of people whose disks have been trashed by Partition Magic or similar software, usually because the disk structure was corrupt to start with – so make sure you have a good backup first.



FACTFILE

WINDOWS WON'T BOOT

Find out how to get Windows up and running if you don't want to use the System Recovery option and you don't have the Windows CD to hand

Q When I switch on my PC, I get the DOS message: "Invalid Boot.ini file booting from C:\Windows.

Windows could not start because the following file is missing or corrupt: <Windows root>\System32\Hal.dll. Please reinstall a copy of the above file."

I have rebooted and attempted to use the F10 System Recovery option, but do not want to select the entire System Recovery option as I understand this will wipe my hard disk and take me back to the factory installation. I have found many potentially useful guides on sorting out the Boot.ini file, but they say I need the Windows XP CD, which I don't have.

Gary Kirby

A Even though you have received invalid Boot.ini and missing Hal.dll errors, this does not necessarily mean the Hal.dll file is corrupted or missing. It may just mean the loader is unable to find it. This can occur if the Boot.ini file is missing or invalid, if Windows XP is not installed in the location specified in the Boot.ini file, if the Ntoskrnl.exe file is missing or damaged or if there has been a hardware failure such as a bad sector on the hard disk.

FIRST STEPS

If your PC has a floppy drive, you can create a boot floppy that may bypass the corrupted file. On another working Windows XP system, open My Computer, right-click on the floppy drive icon and choose Format. Accept the default options. Once formatting is complete, copy the Boot.ini, ntldr and ntdetect.com files from the root directory of the hard disk to the floppy. Select the options to view hidden and system files, as described below.

Verify that the Boot.ini file contains the correct lines. It is a text file so can be viewed in Notepad. If you place the floppy disk into the non-booting computer and power up the PC, it will start booting from the floppy drive. After it reads the Boot.ini file you have placed on the floppy, it will switch to booting from the Windows folder of the specified hard disk. This may not work, but is a fairly quick fix to try and it also confirms that this Boot.ini file is OK. If the PC doesn't boot from the floppy disk, check your BIOS to ensure that the floppy drive is the first in the list of bootable devices.

Hard disk damage is a common cause of this type of error. If you have access to another desktop computer, you should move your hard disk to that system and back up all your data. Run Chkdsk with the Thorough option enabled to scan the drive for errors. Once you have ruled out any hard disk errors or corruption of the file system that may prevent the loader

finding the Windows\System32 folder, you can look for other problems.

CHECKING BOOT.INI

Using Windows Explorer, check in Tools, Folder Options that you have 'Show hidden files and folders' enabled and verify that you have files Boot.ini, ntldr and ntdetect.com in the root directory of your boot drive, which will usually be drive C:. Boot.ini should contain the following lines, or similar:

```
[boot loader]
timeout=30
default=multi(0)disk
(0)rdisk(0)partition(1)\WINDOWS
[operating systems]
multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(0)partition
(1)\WINDOWS="XP Home" /fastdetect
```

These lines will be correct if Windows is located in the Windows folder of the first partition on the PC's only hard disk. The text after the equals sign can contain anything and will be displayed if you have more than one operating system listed. The default= entry should be the same as the first part of the line under [operating systems] – in this case:

```
multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(0)partition
(1)\WINDOWS
```

If your computer has a recovery partition, the main Windows partition might be the second partition. However, most manufacturers deliberately make the recovery partition the second entry in the partition table to avoid this complication. For more complex situations, we suggest using the BootCFG tool or recovery console to create the proper entry as below.

WRONG FILE LOCATIONS

If the root directory contains the Boot.ini, ntldr and ntdetect.com files, check the name of the folder where the operating system is stored. This is usually called Windows, but some manufacturers name it WinNT, which is also the default location for Windows 2000.

It could be that a power surge occurred when writing to the hard disk. This could cause nonsense values to have been written to part of the Windows folder directory index. This prevents access to files and folders beyond that point in the directory. Chkdsk corrects this but may place any inaccessible files and folders it finds in a new folder. You need to move these recovered files to their original locations, if you can figure out where they go.

The NT loader expects to find a folder called System32 inside the operating system's folder. This will usually be called C:\Windows\System32 and will contain lots of files. The

most important files are Ntoskrnl.exe and Hal.dll (HAL stands for Hardware Abstraction Layer). Hal.dll is modified for your system when Windows is first installed and relates specifically to your system hardware. If HAL.dll is missing, look for a copy in the DLLCache folder. If it's not there, and assuming your system disk is drive C:, try to extract the copy in your recovery partition with the command:

```
expand d:\i386\hal.dl_ c:\windows\
system32\hal.dll*
```

Provided you have at least Service Pack 1 installed, there may be a copy of HAL.dll in the C:\Windows\ServicePackFiles\i386 folder. This won't be customised for your system, but it should enable you to boot.

USING BOOTCFG

The Recovery Console has some useful tools to repair problems, although it provides a stark, DOS-style command prompt and so is probably something only advanced users will want to use. If you can borrow a Windows CD, you can boot from it to run Recovery Console by pressing R at the first boot prompt. Alternatively, some manufacturers – including Compaq – have added Recovery Console to the options on their Recovery menu, which is reached by pressing F10 or F12 at startup.

If neither of the above is available and you have a floppy drive, you can download a set of Windows XP Setup floppy disks from Microsoft and run the Recovery Console from them. Search for 'XP Setup disks' at www.microsoft.com/downloads. Once the Recovery Console is running, select the Windows installation you want and type the administrator password when prompted. This won't be your usual password; it was created when Windows was first installed. If you didn't set an administrator password, just press Enter. When you get to the command prompt, type:

```
Fixboot*
bootcfg /rebuild*
```

This will search for the location of Windows. If it gives a correct location, add it to the list of available operating systems. When asked for Load Identifier, type in a description, which can be anything you want. The OS Load option should be set to /fastdetect.

When you restart the PC, you should see a boot options menu. One of the options will be the settings that didn't work before. You'll also see the one you just created. After Windows XP has successfully loaded, the Boot.ini can be edited to remove the incorrect entry. For advanced instructions on editing Boot.ini, see <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/289022>.


SECURITY VIRUS INFECTION

PROBLEM WITH TREND HOUSECALL REPORT

Q I recently ran Trend Micro's HouseCall, which reported a malware program in \$\$BootSector-C. No further information was available. Apart from that, my system was given a clean bill of health. Panda's free virus scan reports no problems at all and neither does Microsoft AntiSpyware. Trend's support response is puzzling, to say the least: "With Windows XP, you should not be infected by a boot virus. If this is the case, it means that you have a DOS partition and you should be able to clean it only with the Rescue disks." But the web page explicitly states that the Rescue disks are "incompatible with operating systems that are installed on the NTFS file system".

I have only a single hard disk in my machine, with a single partition containing an NTFS file system. The only peculiarity I can think of is that its drive letter is F:. For historical reasons, there is no drive C: on my system. Should I be worrying about this report?

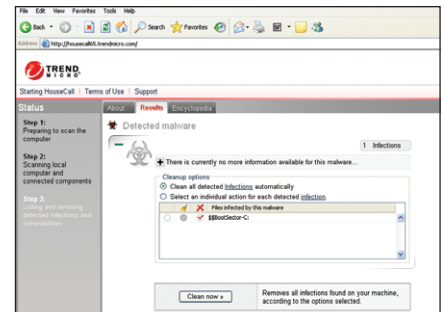
My system is working normally as far as I can tell and it sits behind a hardware firewall.

Mike Challis, mchallis@hempnallhouse.co.uk

A We would also be wary of following Trend's advice to clean this 'infection'. Boot sector viruses are rare these days. Windows XP usually detects corruption to the boot sector and warns you if it is infected. Trend recently brought out a new version of HouseCall, 6.5, and this is suffering some teething problems. In fact, it crashed when we first tried to run it.

Trend's response to your query appears to assume that you must have a second DOS partition on your hard disk, such as the recovery or diagnostics partitions many PC manufacturers create. The HouseCall report also claims that the boot sector of your C: drive is infected, and you don't even have a C: drive.

To be safe, you might want to try the free scanner at www.f-secure.com, which we have



The new version of HouseCall has suffered teething problems, so be wary of cleaning any 'infections' it reports

found to be very thorough. Since Trend HouseCall does not name the infection, and assuming other anti-virus programs find nothing wrong, there is probably a bug in the new HouseCall 6.5 program. Perhaps it is confused by the unusual drive letter that Windows has assigned to your only hard disk.

MP3 PLAYER BUGGY SOFTWARE

SONY CONNECT PLAYER WON'T LOAD

Q I recently bought a Sony NW-A3000 20GB MP3 player, which came with the Connect Player software. Unfortunately, my PC doesn't want to load it. I keep seeing a fatal error window entitled 'CD launcher', which states "not found: resource modules". What does this mean? I've tried loading it on my PC at work and it brings up the install screen without any problems, so presumably it's my PC at fault. Obviously

the MP3 player isn't a lot of use without the software. My Dell computer runs Windows Me.

David Jackman, david.jackman@blueyonder.co.uk

A Check the system requirements of the Sony Connect software. It runs only on Windows 2000 Service Pack 4, Windows XP Home, Media Center or Pro. Unfortunately, Windows Me is not supported. The Sony Connect 1.0 software seems to be the weak point of this

nice-looking MP3 player. A lot of users have found problems; see the comments at www.kanai.net/weblog/archive/2005/11/22/21h17m54s.

The software version supplied on the CD is the first version, which is extremely buggy. An update is available from the Sony website at www.sonydigital-link.com/DNA/ConnectPlayer/Update. This fixes the more serious bugs. You will still have to upgrade Windows to be able to use it, however.

SCANNER PARALLEL PORTS

OLD SCANNER WON'T CONNECT TO NEW PC

Q I recently replaced my old PC with a new Dell model, which I am very pleased with. However, I have a rather old Black Widow 4830 Pro scanner that connected to my old PC by way of a 25-pin parallel port connection. My new PC doesn't have a parallel port connection.

Should I dump my old scanner and get a new one, or is there an adaptor that transfers a parallel port into a USB connection and, if there is, is it cost-effective to buy one for such an old scanner?

Mike Payne, mike.payne@bigfoot.com

A Parallel ports can be added as an expansion card. However even if you were to add one, we doubt you'd find a Windows XP driver for this scanner. Unfortunately, you'll need to buy a new one. Devcom, which made Black Widow scanners, went bust. The domain blackwidow.co.uk is now owned by an internet

search company who had scanner drivers available for download as a free service for a while. It was forced to discontinue this service, though, as too many people asked for help.

There is a comprehensive range of drivers for certain Black Widow scanners at www.topqualityfreeware.com/scanblackwidow.html, but only the USB models are supported for Windows XP. This is because Windows XP restricts direct access to hardware by programs and forces them to work through drivers. Microsoft only provides parallel port drivers that are suitable for use by printers. In theory it is possible to write a parallel port driver that allows for communication with a scanner as well as a printer, but it would be complex and time-consuming. You will find a Windows XP driver for a parallel port scanner only if the manufacturer took the trouble to write one specifically for it.

Since USB scanners superseded parallel port scanners long before Windows XP came along, few – if any – manufacturers bothered to write parallel



▲ USB scanners can now be picked up for very little. We recommend the HP ScanJet 2400, which costs £40

port drivers for Windows 2000 or XP. While drivers written for Windows 2000 may work on Windows XP, those written for older versions of Windows definitely will not work. **CS**